

K. Beaufield (P.)

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New Cavendish Street, Jan. 22, 1781.

THE peculiar circumstances under which I presume to solicit your Vote and Interest on Wednesday next, in support of the Resolution of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to permit me to return to Madras, without prejudice to my rank, oblige me to depart from my intention of waiting, in silence, for the result of the Company's determination thereon, and to request a few moments of your attention to what I now beg leave to lay before you.

I was suspended from the Company's service, and recalled from India, upon a *specific charge*, for which, after the most minute investigation, by the Committee of Correspondence, and Court of Directors, it has been solemnly determined, that the Records and Proceedings of the Company afforded no grounds; but that, on the contrary, my conduct, in the great leading engagement in question, which was entered into to satisfy the claims of the Dutch, "*was productive of public benefit, and deserving of commendation.*"

Thus called from India, upon groundless suggestions, to the great detriment of my character and private affairs, it appeared no way unreasonable to hope, that I might be allowed to return with the public marks of a vindicated character. I accordingly applied to the Court of Directors to be restored to the rank, which, under the impression of disgrace from their orders of suspension and recall, I had resigned. The Directors, after due deliberation, admitted the justice

justice of my pretensions, and granted my request; but certain Proprietors having, at a General Court held on the 20th of December last, expressed dissatisfaction with this Resolution of the Court of Directors, a General Court was, at their instance, appointed to be held on the 17th instant, to take into consideration the *whole of my conduct*, during my residence in India.

For the more perfect understanding of every thing relative to my transactions, the whole Records and Proceedings of the Company, both at home and abroad, in which I was any way concerned, were printed under the authority of the Court of Directors, and delivered to the Proprietors.

With four weeks notice of the time when this enquiry was to be gone into, and whilst the MOVER must, in justice to the propriety of his own conduct towards the Court, be supposed to be master of the nature, extent, and evidence of the charge he intended to bring against me; I might, perhaps, in candour have expected, that reasonable notice should have been given me, what parts of my conduct would be objected to; or if any mode of enquiry, or species of evidence, unusual in that Court, was meant to be proposed, that I should have been informed to what points they were directed, in order to prepare for my defence.

But no such information was given; and I entered the Court in perfect ignorance of what was to be alledged against me.

The MOVER exhibited SEVENTEEN CHARGES, but was unable to support them, even by his own partial extracts, from those printed records and proceedings, which are the only evidence upon which the Conduct of the Company's Servants in India has usually, (if not always)

always) been tried; in aid whereof, he offered the verbal evidence of persons alleged to be willing to appear at his instance in support of his allegations.

The General Court took into mature consideration the consequences which would result to its future proceedings, from establishing the practice of examining parole evidence of such distant transactions; produced by disputing parties; taken under no sanction; examined under no authority or power of punishment in case of prevarication or falsehood; admitted without the means of doing justice to the adverse party, either by compelling the appearance of other witnesses capable of contradicting their allegations, should such persons even happen to be resident in this country; or by obliging such voluntary witnesses to answer any questions, except those which they thought proper to reply to; and without any previous notice being given of the persons meant to be produced, or the points to which they were to be examined. The Court also considered, that the printed Records contained all the information resulting from a special enquiry upon the spot; and therefore determined, upon a division, that the witness proposed should not be called in.

The business was thus reduced to the evidence already in the hands of the Proprietors, or such other original papers, and authenticated vouchers, as the MOVER might have laid before the Court, if he had any such to produce; no such evidence being brought forward, the question was sent to the ballot, "*To approve of the resolution of the Court of Directors to permit me to return to my station without prejudice to my rank.*"

Under these circumstances it may be expected, that I should refer to, or shortly state, the evidence in the printed proceedings, which contradicts

dicts such parts of the *frontiers articles* as depend upon evidence; and that I should reply to those parts which appear to be grounded upon no evidence whatever. In that view, I take the liberty to inclose a copy of the said accusations, with answers to them; and, with the utmost deference, to submit the whole of my case to your candid determination.

I have the honour to be,

Your most obedient, and

most humble Servant,

PAUL BENFIELD.



